

Our Lady Help of Christians

BE STILL

Take a moment to allow whatever is in your heart to rise and offer your thoughts to the loving care of the Lord today.

Gathering Prayer

Loving God,
Today we celebrate the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians.
We remember Mary as a faithful servant and a woman of blessing and grace.
Be with us now, as for a moment of the day we stop and we think and we pray.
Amen.

READING

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke (1:39-56)

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

And Mary said:

*'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
and my spirit exults in God my saviour;
because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.
Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me
blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is his name,
and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who
fear him.
He has shown the power of his arm,
he has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted
the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things,
the rich sent empty away.'*

He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy—according to the promise he made to our ancestors—of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

The gospel of the Lord.

Ponder

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) noted that in the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to practice *Lectio Divina* – the reading of God's word in prayer asking that it 'enlighten and renew' us.

The following questions may help with this:

- Lord, what does this text mean to me?
- What is it about my life that you want me to change by this text?
- What troubles me about this text?
- Why am I not interested in this?
- What do I find pleasant about this text?
- What is it about this word that moves me?
- What attracts me?
- Why does it attract me?

Reflect

Those of us who have been brought up Catholic have memories of Mary, I am sure. For me it is of the travelling Mary statue. Travelling Mary would be at my grandparents' house once year for a week and during that week our family would drive each night to Nana and Grandad's house where, along with some of the local parishioners, we would pray the rosary. At the conclusion of the rosary, it was customary for the people in the room to move forward and to touch the Mary statue.

I thought travelling Mary was quite beautiful. She was tall, dressed in blue and her face was framed by a white edged veil. Travelling Mary was calm. And sometimes during the rosary, in the half light of the evening, I thought I saw her eyes soften and come to life and I wondered how she felt listening to our little prayers.

I suspect that gazing up at travelling Mary as a little girl helped to form my religious imagination. When I looked up I didn't just see a statue – I saw something that helped me

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to understand a little more about role that the special people from our religious history played for Catholics. Catholics honoured Mary for her role as the mother of Jesus and as the woman of faith who bore a son and journeyed with him to the cross and beyond. Her faith, I learned, gave her a particular place in the collective religious history. For a beginning little Catholic it was also an introduction to the world of the mystical.

And maybe that's part of the beauty of religious imagination when it comes to statues. They can be touched and they can bring us to our knees. Perhaps they can even enable people to see God working in their lives. And that's why I remember travelling Mary: for those moments in time as we knelt and prayed the rosary I began to understand that generations of people had known and loved Mary who knew and loved Jesus who knew and loved God – and I was included in the story too.

—Cathy Jenkins, Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation Melbourne

RESPOND

Pray

Hail Mary, full of grace.
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.
Amen
